DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 193 FL 013 737

TITLE English Teaching Profile: Botswana.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English Language and Literature Div.
PUB DATE Jan 82
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Policy; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; *Language Role; Modern Language Curriculum; *Official Languages; *Second Language Instruction; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Botswana

ABSTRACT

This profile of the English language teaching situation in Botswana examines the role of English in society and in the educational system. The status of English as the second official language is noted, and the English curriculum is described from its beginning in the first primary year through secondary school and the university. Statistics on teachers of English in secondary schools are provided, and information is given on English teaching materials and materials support. A diagram is presented on the organization of the educational administrative system. Also discussed are (1) educational planning in which the highest priority is given to primary education, (2) teaching of English outside the educational system, (3) British Council support services, (4) American support through the Peace Corps and the International Communication Agency, (5) other agency support, (6) commercial opportunities, (7) creative writing, and (8) current research. A summary statement concludes that the main strength of English teaching in Botswana is that its importance is widely acknowledged, and that its main weakness is the lack of resources. A bibliography is included. (AMH)

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THE BRITISH COUNCIL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DIVISION

ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Botswana **Date: January 1982**

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1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

Setswana, the mother-tongue of about four-fifths of the indigenous population, is the national language and the main vehicle of local culture and tradition. Botswana's geographical location and Commonwealth membership reinforce the prestige of English as its second official language, used in international transactions of every kind and as the main medium of instruction in all upper primary and secondary classes.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Pupils start school at the age of 6+. English is taught as a subject from the first primary year and becomes the chief medium of instruction from the fifth year onwards. It is an integral component of the Primary School Leaving Examination which is taken at the end of the seventh year and of the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination taken in the third secondary year, both of which are set by the Ministry of Education.

Time devoted to English increases from 4 hours a week in Standard 1 to 5½ in Standard 7. Junior Secondary English takes 8 hours a week. Only at or above the level of the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examination is literature separately taught. In the fourth and fifth secondary years leading to the COSC examinations 3½ hours a week are spent on language and 3½ on literature. COSC in the First or Second Division, with a credit in English Language, is the normal entry requirement for University degree and diploma courses.

The transformation, on 1 July 1982, of the University College into the University of Botswana is accompanied by other changes. The Unit-Credit system is being phased out. The first degree plus concurrent certificate in education for secondary teachers is being superseded by a one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education course to be taken after completion of a four-year degree programme. The Diploma in Secondary Education is obsolescent; and after 1984 no more students will be recruited to prepare for it. Details of the expected changes will appear in successive editions of the University Calendar. At present, English (under such rubrics as 'Study Skills' or 'Communication Skills') is taught in the first or foundation year of most academic courses in every faculty. Undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities who offer English as one of their two major subjects are required to take at least one language course and one literature course in each year of the four-year programme. This pattern is likely to continue.

FL013737

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At the Botswana Polytechnic, where the qualifications for which students prepare follow British models, a serious attempt is made to link instruction in English with craft and technician training in civil, electrical and mechanical engineering as well as in telecommunications. The Botswana Training Centre (providing courses in secretarial and commercial subjects), the University-administered Institute of Adult Education, the Botswana Agricultural College, the National Health Institute (training nurses, midwives and paramedical staff) and the Brigades all include some English tuition in their practical courses, but only the University and the Polytechnic employ ELT specialists.

The Department of Non-Formal Education includes the Botswana Extension College, which continues to offer Junior Certificate and GCE 'O' level correspondence courses (some supported by radio programmes) in English and other subjects to about 3,000 students.

Primary school teachers take a two-year course without subject specialisation at one of the primary Teacher Training Colleges at Francistown, Lobatse and Serowe. Graduate teachers for secondary schools are trained at the University. Non-graduate secondary school teachers, hitherto trained at the University, will from 1984 take a three-year course at a new purpose-built training college. They may offer English as one of their two main teacher subjects and all students, regardless of specialisation, are required to take courses in English and mathematics for the first two years. Tutors for TTCs are among students receiving training at the University's Department of Primary Education, which offers a four-year BEd programme and a two year-year Diploma course.

The University Department of Primary Education, as well as various Departments of the Ministry of Education, provides short in-service courses and workshops for teachers. The Chief Education Officer (Primary and Teacher Training) exercises general supervision over all training activities for primary school teachers.

Secondary school inspection is carried out by Senior Education Officers or Education Officers based at Ministry Headquarters in Gaborone who report to the Chief Education Officer (Secondary).

On 1 March 1981, Inspectors of Schools and Field Officers of the In-Service Team were restyled Education Officers and combined into a single service for inspecting primary schools. Their work is coordinated by Regional Education Officers reporting to the Chief Education Officer (P & TT). None claims special expertise in teaching English as a second language to primary school children in Africa.

School textbooks are centrally prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The Chief Education Officer (Curriculum Development and Evaluation) monitors the content of syllabuses, nationally administered tests and examinations as well as learning aids and materials, with particular attention to those which apply to primary school children and their teachers.

At all levels, the amount of reading done depends mainly on what books are prescribed by examination syllabuses. Very few pupils or students read for enjoyment - or read anything that is not listed in their syllabus.

No television programmes are transmitted from Botswana. Those receivable along its borders emanate from adjacent countries.

Radio Botswana broadcasts every week about 60 hours of speech (20 in English, the rest in Setswana). Fifty-four 15-minute schools programmes, including

some repeats, are broadcast each week in term-time. With one exception, these are in Setswana. The exception is English for Standards 2-7. This series is old-fashioned. The Schools Broadcasting Unit is understaffed, and preparatory and follow-up work is inadequate. Among ELT programmes of local origin, only a few (mostly those initiated by the Department of Non-Formal Education) exploit the medium at all effectively.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

In primary schools there are no specialist teachers of English. Any teacher may be called on to teach some English. Almost all primary teachers are African, and most are citizens of Botswana. In 1980 there were 5178, of whom 35% were unqualified. Women outnumber men by roughly 2 to 1. The average pupil-teacher ratio is 33:1, but in rural areas it may be no more than 1?:1. Head Teachers may split classes of more than 45 and request the assignment of extra staff.

The three existing TTCs accommodate about 300 students each. At Serowe all the students are women. A fourth TTC, of similar size, is being built at Tlokweng; it should accept its first intake in 1983. The two-year primary TTC course leads to the award of a Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC).

Requirements for secondary teachers of arts subjects (455 in 1982, 530 in 1985) are expected to exceed numbers available (310 in 1982, 480 in 1985). Qualified teachers of science and mathematics are even scarcer. (The projected shortfall for 1985 is 280, compared with 50 for Arts). According to the current National Development Plan (p115), although the shortage of teachers of Arts subjects should diminish, 'the main shortage in 1985 will be of teachers of English and this will remain a priority area for recruitment'.

Latest available figures for teachers of English in Government Secondary schools are:

Batswana	88
British	33
American	5
Others	17

The Botswana English Teachers' Association (BETA) is the one local professional organisation for teachers of English. Most of its members work in secondary schools but, in 1981, more than 20 primary school teachers also belonged to it, and the BETA Committee of which the Senior Education Officer (English) is an ex officio member, is trying to attract more. It publishes a cyclostyled newsletter every term and organises writing competitions, drama festivals, film shows and lectures. About 60 secondary school teachers are regular members.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

Basic materials are available in adequate quantity. Government secondary schools and all but the remotest government primary schools usually manage to get what they have ordered a year in advance. Private schools may not have the resources to order as many titles or copies as they should. The

supply of materials to distant rural areas is complicated by poor secondary roads and communications and by scarcity of reliable transport.

Textbooks are prescribed or recommended by the Ministry of Education but orders are placed by Education Secretaries of Town or District Councils through the Ministry of Local Government and Lands. Various plans for rationalising the distribution of books and equipment are being considered, but none has yet been officially approved or put into practice.

The Botswana Book Centre in Gaborone to which most book-orders for schools are sent has a reasonable selection of textbooks, literary texts of the kind that schools order, ie mostly books set for examinations and paperback fiction, especially by African authors. The National Library Service is well stocked in Gaborone and operates branch and mobile libraries. The British Council Library in Gaborone offers institutional membership to schools and is much used by teachers and students. The American Library in Gaborone appeals more specifically to readers with a personal interest in American books, news, and institutions.

The Teaching Aids Production Unit (TAPU) in Francistown, administered by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, makes inexpensive workbooks and visual aids mainly for primary schools, using local talents and materials as far as possible.

Although both projected and non-projected visuals and recordings of speech, poetry and drama may be borrowed from the British Council library, the main demand is for books. Very few commercially produced audiovisual aids are bought for use in schools.

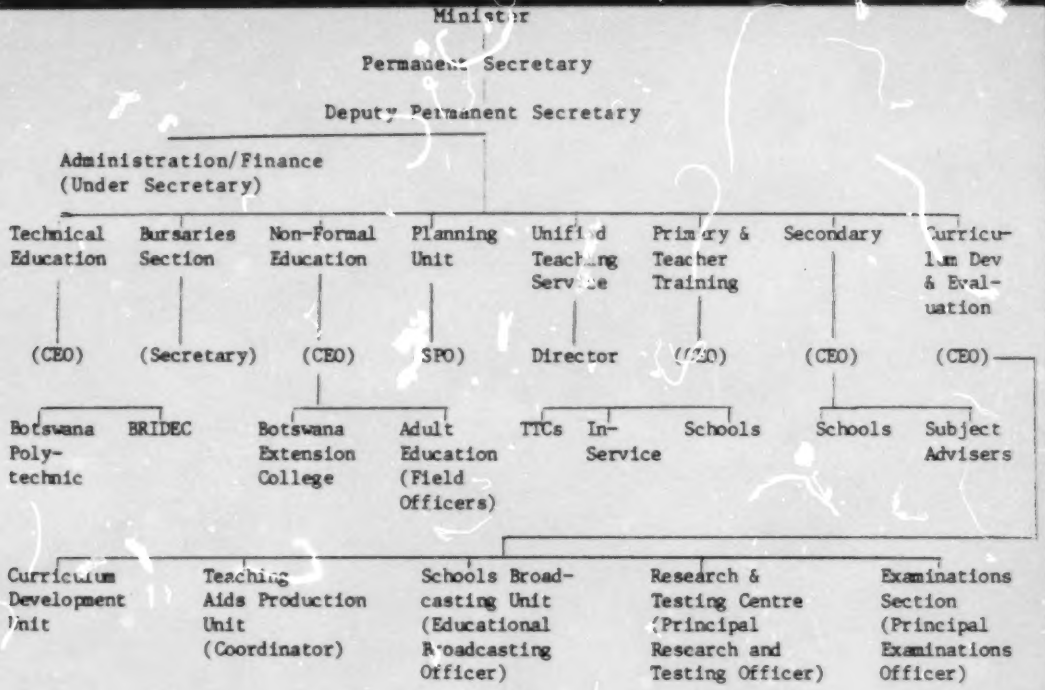
Supplementary reading material of local interest, such as OUP's Leopard Readers or Macmillan's Zebra Readers, is much in demand. Local content appeals more strongly than linguistic grading. At both primary and secondary levels there is a need for a variety of short, simply written, well-illustrated but inexpensive books with names, characters, situations and problems taken from Botswana. South African, East African or Zimbabwean settings alone will not suffice to evoke interest or sympathy, and to many Batswana the climate, culture, flora or fauna of, say, Ghana or Nigeria are as strange as any in the Northern Hemisphere. The need for attractive reading matter in Setswana is even greater than for locally attractive books in simple English. Hardly any English literature is available in Setswana translation, and there is no demand for any such translations.

In primary schools, the Longman Day by Day English Course is being phased out as the core coursebook. For Standards 1-4 it is being superseded by Margaret Rogers and Anne Murray-Robertson Macmillan Primary English Project and for Standards 5-7 by Roy and Jean Bevan Rainbow Red; Rainbow Yellow; Rainbow Blue (Longman).

Both these series are being modified for use in Botswana. N J H Grant, D O Olagoke, K R Southern, Secondary English Project (Longman) is prescribed as the main coursebook for secondary schools.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

The Ministry of Education is organised as follows:



BRIDEC = Brigade Development Centre
CEO = Chief Education Officer
SPO = Senior Planning Officer
TTC = Teacher Training College

The Senior Education Officer (English) is one of the Subject Advisers reporting to the Chief Education Officer (Secondary).

The Curriculum Development Officer (English) is attached to the Curriculum Development Unit and reports to the Chief Education Officer (Curriculum Development and Evaluation).

Section 2 above gives an account of the teaching of English within the Ministry's system.

On 1 July 1982 the University College of Botswana became the University of Botswana. Except insofar as the Faculty of Education is influenced by the requirements of schools and training colleges, the University makes its own arrangements for the teaching of English and of literature in English.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Initiation ceremonies for adolescents, which are still held in parts of Botswana, have encouraged deference to age and tribal authority, social conformity and patient striving for consensus, rather than expressions of individual judgement. These traditional values persist and are not always easy to reconcile with officially favoured innovations.

Formal education in a Western European sense began with the endeavours of nineteenth-century missionaries, who were themselves paternalistic and authoritarian. Until quite late in the history of Bechuanaland Protectorate, British administrators assumed that the territory would be absorbed into South Africa and did little to develop it. The first government secondary school dates from 1965, the year before Botswana emerged as an independent republic. Only since then has there been a serious and sustained effort, reflected in successive National Development Plans, to establish a centrally controlled system of publicly provided education.

Up to 90% of children of school age now undergo some primary schooling which, though free since 1980, is not compulsory. About 50% drop out each year. In 1979, 156,890 were enrolled in primary schools and 16,736 in secondary schools.

In the Government Paper Number 1 of 1977, National Policy on Education, Sections 14, 19, 20, 28(a), 35, 51(b). and 81(d) are directly relevant to English.

Highest priority is at present given to primary education. An attempt is being made to provide universal access to junior secondary schooling. At both primary and secndary level, special importance is attached to English as a medium for further learning and to the development of reading skills.

Comprehensive plans are issued by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Within the Ministry of Education, the Senior Planning Officer is the best source of detailed statistics and information about schools.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no private commercial schools of English; there is no organisation comparable to ALELS or FELCC and no requests for courses of the kinds most usually offered by such organisations.

In Gaborone, there are three recognised, independently-managed English-medium primary schools: Broadhurst (opened in 1982), Northside (opened in 1974) and Thornhill (taken over from the Town Council by the Ministry of Education in 1970), becoming independent in 1981). English-medium primary schools are located in Francistown, Lobatse, Orapa and Selibe-Phikwe.

It is government policy that Batswana children should be educated in Setswana-medium schools. Recognising, however, that the country's temporary dependence on expatriates with special skills requires the provision of English-medium schools for their children, the government has ruled that, as soon as possible, the management and ownership of English-medium schools should be transferred to private, financially independent boards of trustees; that fees at English-medium schools should be set at a level high enough to cover recurrent expenditure; that, in allocating places at these schools, preference should be given to the children of expatriates; and that, while not intending to subsidise Batswana children whose parents send them to such schools or to set up any additional schools of the same kind, it will not obstruct private interests wishing to establish such schools, provided that they conform with the law and do not exploit the public for the sake of private profit.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

One British Council Officer was seconded in 1980 under the Key English Language Teaching Scheme (KELT) to the Department of Curriculum Development in the Ministry of Education.

The British Council in Botswana undertakes no direct teaching of English, but its premises are sometimes used for BETA activities (qv Section 3 above), and support for ELT is given through bursaries, visitorships, consultancies, exhibitions, drama tours and library services (including films and recordings).

In September/October 1980, Eleanor Thomas and Gareth Armstrong toured Botswana with well-received performances, chiefly for school audiences, of lengthy excerpts from Shakespeare plays prescribed for the COSC examinations.

In August 1980, Dr Alan Davies held a seminar in Botswana on English Language Testing. In February 1981, five education officers or senior teachers from Botswana attended a course on language testing at the University of Edinburgh.

A seminar in Botswana organised, in September 1981, by the Director of the Scottish Centre for Education Overseas to introduce education officers to modern approaches to primary school inspection was followed in November/December 1981 by a study tour (financed by the British Council) enabling six officers who had attended the seminar to go to Moray House and acquaint themselves more closely with advisory procedures and techniques as practised in Scotland.

Few learning materials other than books (qv Section 4) are purchased by or for schools, but materials of British provenance are preferred, except when the Ministry's own Teaching Aids Production Unit in Francistown can supply local equivalents at lower cost.

The extent of ODA supplementation for experienced British teachers and teacher-trainers has in recent years been much reduced. Those concerned specifically with English have been teaching mainly at senior secondary (COSC) level. Offers of contracts on local terms have multiplied correspondingly. The Government of Botswana requested the British Council to recruit British teachers to serve, from January 1982, for at least two years in secondary schools of various kinds throughout the country. Of the first 50 to have arrived, 24 are teaching English and History.

Systematic approaches to literature via stylistics or discourse analysis are not attempted; neither is any marked interest shown in notional language-syllabuses, or (except in publishers' advertising) in distinctively 'communicative' learning styles.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The Peace Corps gives priority to science and mathematics, but has 17 volunteers teaching English in secondary schools (5 of these work in government secondary schools).

The International Communication Agency, which distributes English Teaching Forum, has also offered to organise a 5-day seminar (with the ICA African Regional English Teaching Director and an expert recruited from a private American institution specifically for this seminar as Tutors) for Batswana

secondary school teachers of English. Dates and themes acceptable to both the Agency and the Ministry have yet to be agreed.

US AID has funded the Primary Education Improvement Programme under which the Department of Primary Education was established at the University. The staff of the Department includes a reading specialist and a specialist in the teaching of English as a second language overseas. At the invitation of the KELT officer, both have joined the Primary English Panel and are contributing helpfully to curriculum development and in-service work. The close cooperation already established is likely to continue.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

This is given, through capital aid or training schemes, to education generally rather than to English teaching particularly. The British Council is occasionally asked to assess the linguistic proficiency of persons wishing to take English-medium courses in countries other than Britain or the USA.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

These are circumscribed by Botswana's small population and limited resources and by the Government's preference for dealing with other governments or with parastatal bodies. Few Batswana can afford to take courses abroad except with government sponsorship. Requests for British educational services are normally channelled through the British Council. There is no demand from schools for elaborate or expensive hardware.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

The Writers' Association of Botswana is supported by the Department of Information and Broadcasting Services, whose monthly magazine Kutlwano ('mutual understanding') reports on its activities. (Articles in Kutlwano are printed in both Setswana and English.) There is much talk about creative writing, but no original imaginative writing of note has yet appeared either in English or in Setswana.

Both Longman and Macmillan have offices in Gaborone. Oxford University Press, from its more distant base in Cape Town, is also interested. Visits from representatives of other publishers are less regular. All are eager to find and encourage local authors, but more immediately concerned with marketing their educational products. Printers in Botswana lack the technical resources and editorial skills of established international publishing houses, on which the country will continue to rely for work of superior quality.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

Graduates wishing to undertake formal research in English literature or into the English language are most likely to do so abroad. University and national libraries, though adequately stocked for most readers who have access to them,

are unlikely to meet the needs of students writing doctoral dissertations on highly specialised topics. For all but a tiny minority of Batswana, that level of literary study would be too rarefied.

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15. GENERAL STATEMENT

The main strength of English teaching in Botswana is that everyone concerned with or about education acknowledges its importance and its necessity. The main weakness is shortage of resources in money and skilled manpower needed to support it. Too many teachers are untrained or undertrained.

At present, Botswana citizens with degrees or similar formal qualifications have little trouble in finding socially and economically rewarding employment, so that potentially able and productive students are often disinclined to exert themselves in pursuit of academic or professional excellence. Persons who hold senior appointments and whose professional commitment matches their ability are much in demand but commonly burdened with a miscellany of routine chores which, in more developed countries, could safely be delegated to secretarial staff; so that they are unable to do justice to more essential tasks.

Since Independence, there has been a conspicuous expansion of educational opportunities. Possibly for that reason, public comment has focused on numbers (enrolments, examination scores, and the like) and has shown relatively little interest in specifying criteria of quality.

The English used in Botswana is marked by inattention to semantic distinctions, to mechanical accuracy, and to appropriateness or consistency of style.

General improvements will take time to achieve.

Meanwhile, however, problems in education give rise to lively discussions, both public and private, and, though the report of the National Commission on Education has laid down a coherent strategy for future developments, tactical adjustments and changes of detail in administrative structures may be made with remarkable speed.